(iii) Improvements in the Signalling system like Double Distant Signalling & Auxiliary Warning System (AWS).

(iv) Upgradation of tracks, high speed turnouts, increased reliability of equipment, and increase in line capacity.

(c) All trains of Konkan Railway are time tabled on the basis of a maximum speed of 100 kmph. At present there is no proposal to raise the speed of trains on Konkan Railway.

Overstaffing in Railways

1072. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether overstaffing in the Railways is costing it dear; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to review the situation and reduce the staff strength?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Increasing staff costs as a percentage of earnings is becoming a matter of concern for Indian Railways, more so after implementation of the recommendations of the Fifth Central Pay Commission. Containing manpower costs therefore not only constitutes an important challenge but also a strategic decision to ensure financial viability of the organisation.

However, even before the impact of the Vth Pay Commission could be felt, the Railways had embarked on a plan of action of regulating their Manpower both in terms of numbers and skill so as to be able to build/maintain and operate the system in the most productive manner possible.

To this end, current measures include regulating manpower at all levels and comparing staff productivity through Internal Benchmarking exercises.

Stoppage of supply of High Tensile Steel Wire to sleeper manufacturer

1073. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Railways lost twenty four crores of rupees per annum as a result of the decision of the Railway Board in April 1992 for stoppage of High Tensile Steel Wire to the sleeper manufacturer;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether responsibility has since been fixed in this case and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Based on difference in rates of High Tensile Wire finalised in tenders in November, 94 and rates being reimbursed to concrete sleeper manufacturers as per policy decision taken in April, 1992, it was perceived that Railways were losing twenty four crores of rupees per annum. However, this estimate didn't account for saving to Railways by way of the cost in processing of tenders and procurement, rehandling/retransport of material, cost of storage and damage during storage as compared to allowing sleeper manufacturer to procure it directly. Railways had carried out review of some old cases and already recovered Rs. 5.4 crores claimed as excess amount. Railway appointed a Committee to investigate the aspects of collusion by sleeper manufacturer in claiming higher rates. Based on committee's recommendation and for complete review, committees have been appointed at zonal railways for undertaking "Book Examination" of records of all sleeper manufacturing firms of relevant period to assess the excess amount claimed by them if any and fix responsibility.

Railway have revised policy since November, 1994 to arrange supply of High Tensile steel wire to the sleeper manufacturers based on rates finalised in open tenders by the Railway Board.

Agreement by Zonal Railways for Awarding Book Stalls

1074. SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:
SHRI GAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an agreement is to be executed by the Zonal Railways with each of the book stall contractors, including unemployed graduate categories, on awarding a book stall; if so, the terms and conditions thereof;

(b) what are the norms/rules framed for the book stall contractors to consider their services/working as satisfactory; and

(c) what are the details of instructions/directions issued from time to time by the Ministry in this regard?